Dog boarding checklist.

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What to pack for dog boarding: vaccination records, food for the trip plus a few extra days, medication with written instructions, a familiar item from home and emergency contacts. This checklist for your dog's first boarding stay is based on public guidance from Texas A&M and the AVMA. Tick items off as you go, or print it.

Choosing the facility

- [ ] Tour the facility and look at how clean and organized it is.[1]
- [ ] Ask how often the dogs are fed and whether they get enough exercise.[3]
- [ ] Ask how the day runs, and whether veterinary services are available.[1, 3]
- [ ] Notice whether staff welcome questions and tours, and how loud it is.[1]

Before you book

- [ ] Check in with your regular vet, especially if your dog is elderly, medically fragile or highly anxious.[1]
- [ ] Ask the facility which vaccines it requires and make sure your dog is up to date. Texas A&M vets say vaccines are essential because group settings increase the risk of disease transmission.[1]

In the days before

- [ ] Ask the facility which forms it needs, including its emergency authorization form.[2]
- [ ] Choose an emergency contact who can act for you, and if your dog is microchipped, add that person to the microchip registry.[2]
- [ ] Write down your dog's exercise routine, favorite games or toys, and any medical conditions that could lead to an emergency.[2]

Packing day

- [ ] Your dog's regular food for the stay plus a few extra days, with clear written feeding instructions.[2]
- [ ] Enough medication and supplements for the trip plus a few extra days, with clear written instructions, plus a note on which treats are okay.[2]
- [ ] A comfort item such as a worn T-shirt or a favorite toy, unless your dog is a destructive chewer.[1]
- [ ] Vaccination records, including proof of rabies, and up-to-date medical information.[2]
- [ ] Every way to reach you, plus your regular vet's name and contact details.[2]

After pickup

- [ ] Expect a short readjustment: extra attention, more sleep, or a day to settle back in. Not eating for the first 12 to 24 hours is common.[1]
- [ ] Call your vet if vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, lethargy or big behavior changes last or are severe.[1]

What should I pack for dog boarding?

Pack your dog's regular food for the stay plus a few extra days, any medication and supplements with clear written instructions, vaccination records including proof of rabies, a comfort item such as a worn T-shirt or a favorite toy, and every way to reach you plus your regular vet's contact details.[1, 2]

What should I ask a dog boarding facility?

Ask how often the dogs are fed, whether they get enough exercise, whether veterinary services are available, which vaccines are required, and whether staff welcome questions and tours.[1, 3]

What should I expect after boarding?

Expect a short readjustment, with extra attention, more sleep or a day to settle back in. Not eating for the first 12 to 24 hours is common. Call your vet if vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, lethargy or big behavior changes last or are severe.[1]

> **Talk to your vet.** Your vet can check vaccines, flag anything specific to your dog and advise before a first stay. Bring this list to your appointment.

Want the reasons behind each item? Read How do you prepare your dog for boarding for the first time?.

Sources.

1. Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Pet Talk. Planning ahead: reducing stress when boarding your pet. 2026.
2. American Veterinary Medical Association. Ensuring your pet is protected when you're away. AVMA, n.d.
3. Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Pet Talk. Holiday travel: should pets come along? 2017.